

Leadership Letter

Are you living in a culture of honour?

At the beginning of the year Rite and I were visiting our kids in Edinburgh where our daughter was working in a 5 star hotel as a waitress. As a special treat she took all the family out for a meal in their beautiful restaurant and booked Rite & I into the best room for one night. At first we felt guilty having all this money spent on us but then relaxed and thoroughly enjoyed it. We definitely felt spoiled. There was even an expensive bottle of champagne waiting for us in the room, on the house! We felt honoured.

Dictionary definition of honour:

1. A person or thing that brings esteem; *you bring honour to our profession*
2. The quality of knowing and doing what is morally right: *I must as a matter of honour avoid any taint of dishonesty*
3. Something regarded as a rare opportunity and bringing pride and pleasure; a privilege; *she had the honour of being received by the queen*

Here are a few aspects of how the culture of honour can lived out:

1. Honour is a command with a promise: Long life flows from honour as shared in the fifth commandment. *Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you (Ex 20:12).* Dishonouring therefore does the opposite. Yet we find it so easy to speak badly of others, especially if they've upset us, made decisions that affect us that we disagree with, or if they've acted irresponsibly. It's much easier to honour those we agree with or people we believe to be honourable themselves. Our culture doesn't generally honour something or someone unless we agree with it, or believe it to be deserving of honour. When we honour others we obey Romans 12:10 "*Honour one another above yourselves,*" and come against the temptation of competition, jealousy, inferiority, superiority and control in our lives

2. Honouring people for who they are and making them feel valued:

Honouring transforms relationships as it brings out the best in others as well as ourselves. When was the last time someone said or did something to make you feel special or feel spoiled? When have you had that warm glow inside that comes from someone honouring you by words and actions?

Some people ooze honour. Rita, who joins us often in the retreat centre to function in her ministry of hospitality, loves to honour people. Just last month she was excited about blessing our wonderful cooks (my son and his wife) and knowing they had no support, she made a nice tin and placed their names on it. At every opportunity she came up the front, smiled and gave the tin a tap, to remind everyone about the offering for them. Just a few days later she was able to give 140 euros as an honouring gift. How blessed they were.

Do you excited about blessing people? As leaders we have the power to richly bless and honour so many people, if we just take the time and have the mindfulness to consider the what, how and to whom.

Jesus blessed and honoured little children and took them in his arms. Bill Beckham, a cell church guru of 15 years ago came to Scotland to run a seminar and was at our home for a meal. The doorbell rang and our son of 7 answered the door. We realised we hadn't heard anything for fifteen minutes or so and went to investigate. There was Bill sitting on the stairs talking to our son, deep in conversation. He was giving honour to our son through his focused attention and conversation.

Jesus honoured women by elevating them in the society. He received women on his team, was supported by them and spoke freely with them whether they were the Samaritan at the well, a prostitute washing his feet or brought to him caught in adultery. He didn't judge, preach or make them feel uncomfortable but established a friendship bridge and gave honour.

Let's use every celebration to give honour whether it's birthdays, anniversaries, passing tests or gaining accomplishments. There's enough discouragement in all our lives, what we need more of than anything, is encouragement, affirmation and honour.

3. Creating a community where people are honoured for what they do and how they live: We just received an email after one of our retreats, thanking us for the week and writing a prayer for us. He took the time to be mindful of what he had seen and received, wrote about it and sent it to us. He gave honour and blessed us so much.

A few weeks ago we ran a couples retreat and had the privilege of serving seven couples in attendance. During the sessions we shared personally from our lives. One day Rite was sharing about team and gave a number of examples of how I had served her in our marriage team. She affirmed me in front of the group and my emotional tank was filled up. She had given me honour. I love doing the same for her. In a similar vein, I remember years ago we were having a strategy conference in Scotland and I discovered the power of public honouring. One of my leaders had just shared a powerful story of how he had engaged in evangelism on outreach. I knew him to have a love for sharing the gospel and so I honoured him publically for giving us all such a good model of a ywam evangelist. Those simple words meant the world to him. He thanked me so much afterwards and a new bond was formed between us. Every time you affirm someone's ministry publically you elevate them and show honour.

4. Giving opportunity for people to shine without having to prove themselves first: Leaders have the power to open doors for people, to give people a platform and to assign roles, jobs and tasks. Many times we could do it better ourselves (or we think we can) but we honour others as we give them the chance to speak or take a leadership role. We may feel we are taking a risk but we don't communicate that. We communicate confidence in their ability and an amazing thing happens – people rise to the expectation we place in them.

In team we honour others by sharing the roles that bring some glory or recognition. I often spend time thinking how to share responsibilities so everyone feels they have a significant part to play. People feel honoured.

5. Covering sin and failure, where there is understanding, repentance and vulnerability: It is never good protocol to expose, criticise and judge sin but unfortunately these behaviours come all too easy. There is a time to call people to account and there is a time to cover sin with love. The bible tells us that "Love covers a multitude of sin" and that's a lot of sin. How much do we in fact cover and how much do we just ignore because we are fearful to confront?

How much sin does God cover in my life? Lots – and I'm so glad he does. And it's always a lot more than we think because we have such blind spots. Love covered the murder and adultery of David, the betrayal of Judas, the religious cleansing of Paul, the pride of Nebuchadnezzar and so much more in the lives of biblical leaders. How much then should we also cover the sin of others?

Early in my leadership I accepted a student into the DTS who turned out to be a real distraction for many on the school. Having spoken to her on several occasions with no positive results I asked her to leave. I don't think I would have done the same today as I'm sure there was more I could have done. For a start I should have prayed more clearly in accepting her in the first place. Her pastor father was not happy to say the least and demanded her payment in full and vowed that he would be speaking to my leaders and I would not be able to continue in my leadership role. I was physically shaking as I put the phone down. Sure enough very soon afterwards I received a call from my leader Lynn Green in the UK. I wondered if my time in ywam was finished and I'd have to leave a failure. I was ready with my resignation speech but I never had to give it. Lynn covered me. He took the heat from this pastor, who had called him immediately asking for consequences to my leadership role. Lynn stood by me and honoured me through the ordeal.

The prodigal son was on his way home after having squandered all his inheritance money, half starved and willing to work as a hired servant in his Dad's farm. While a long way off, his Dad saw him and ran to him. He hugged and kissed him and pulled out the fatted calf and put on a huge party to celebrate. The father could easily have been ashamed of his son and welcomed him home in the quietness of the downstairs kitchen, out of the way of everyone. But instead, he overcame the shame that people were placing on him and his son, by throwing a party. He showered love and forgiveness and covered his sin. There was nothing his son could do to stop being a son. So he honoured him – his son had returned. How do I respond to those who have failed, made mistakes or feel ashamed?

A challenge: It's a tremendous challenge to honour others, especially to make the choice, with God's help, to honour the dishonourable, the ones we disagree with, those who have let us down or treated us badly. However, when we know who we are and whose we are, we're free to honour freely, and in doing so reflect the Kingdom of God, where the 'first will be last and the last will be first' (Mark 10:31).

Enjoy establishing this culture of honour in your sphere of influence.

Until next month

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